

ally of progress against tradition, of enlightenment against obscurantism, of life against the rampant formalism in theology and philosophy. True, it might, and did to some extent, prove a weapon in the hands of the champions of tradition as well as progress. But the spirit of the age was too strong for the men halting between two opinions. The divine fiat had gone forth once more, Let there be light, and the dawn came as of old to quicken the world with a new life. Humanism led men to the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek, revealed the fountain of Christian teaching flowing strong and clear beyond the mire of superstition and fraud with which the centuries had contaminated it. It led, too, to the translation of the Bible in the vernacular, and to the spread, through the printing press, of a popular literature in which the burning questions of the hour were debated in the language of the common man, in popular invectives and satires such as those of Hans Rosenpliiit, Doctor Brant, Ulrich von Hutten, and many other poignant scribes. " What an age ! " cried Ulrich von Hutten, " learning flourishes ; the minds of men are awake; it is a joy to be alive." It was an age in which the spirit of criticism and opposition to things established was omnipresent. Even in theological circles before the advent of Luther there was hot contention between scholists and progressives, orthodox and heterodox, Reuchlinists and Dominicans, while in the schools the obscurantists waged a bitter warfare with the champions of the new culture and its aspirations and methods.

Very important is this appearance of the popular Bible, for the popular Bible put into the hands of the people the means of imbibing a theology which collided with that of the Church. And Luther's translation of the Bible into German was by no means the first. The issue of translation after translation in the vernacular in the latter half of the fifteenth century is indeed a characteristic of the time. The people, much to the chagrin of some of the bishops, read the Gospels and the Epistles for themselves. The men of tradition (though not all) might look askance at their Bible reading. Do we not hear of a peasant of Villingen, " who," says the chronicler, " could read and had learned the whole Bible by heart, and took to disputing with the parsons on texts of Scripture